

THE MUSIC OF KERALA—A STUDY

Leela Omchery

“The art-music of Kerala, as distinguished from folk music, is often spoken of as falling under two main types, *Sopana* and *Desiya*. The former is considered as signifying the original music of this land and the latter as signifying modern music, influenced by what is known as Karnatak music. But on a close examination one can see that *Sopana* and *Desiya* are only two different styles of singing and that the scientific basis for both is one and the same”¹.

Such is the opinion of Sri Venkata Subramonia Iyer. As a support of this contention, appeared the following report about a performance,

“Sri Palghat Venkata Krishna Bhagavata next rendered a few Kathakali *padas* in the “traditional style”. Introducing the *vidvan*, Mr. T. V. Rajagopal said that he was learned in *Kathakali* and Karnatak music. Vidvan T. N. Swaminatha Pillai, thanking the Bhagavata said, that *Kathakali* music had unique features (and) Sri Venkata Krishna Bhagavata had rendered it in such a manner that the members of the audience were able to understand and appreciate the “style of singing” of these *padas*”².

From this statement and report, it is clear that the Music of Kerala called *Sopana* is different from the *Desiya* or Karnatak traditions and the difference lies not in their theory but in their practice. If that is so the question is how do they differ and why. In this article I wish to stress that my observations are not conclusions, but only suggestions and possibilities.

1. The Journal of the Madras Music Academy 1954, Vol. XXV.

2. Ibid p. 37, 1954.

It appears to me, that *Sopana*, is a distinctive style of music in which we find elements of Karnatak and Hindustani music. Yet neither of these systems can contain this music fully or satisfactorily. It is a system with a sound basis and highly developed aesthetic values.

[Kerala music underwent a great change, with the introduction of *Geeta Govinda*. Not music alone, even the dance. As in technique and expression *Krishnattam* the predecessor which was modelled after *Geeta Govinda* and *Kathakali*, the successor, differ from their neighbouring styles, so also the music which was also developed on the principles of the music of *Geeta Govinda*.

Now, the music of *Geeta Govinda* had its roots in certain old principles of Indian Music. Scholars like O. C. Goswami, Prof. R. Roy and others link its technique with the presentday Hindustani music. The *Sthaya-vaga* principles, *vadi samvadtiva*, straight note singing, *Ranga-anga padhati*, *purvanga-uttaranga* classification, time cycles etc., though they may be slowly disappearing, are still popular among the traditional musicians of the North and these are the products of our old culture.

These aspects are very much present in *Kathakali* music and I have explained why they are essential there. This according to me, makes it different from the singing of Karnatak and makes it similar to Hindustani music. Since the Kerala dance and its music owe much to the techniques of *Geeta Govinda* of Bengal, the similarities cannot just be accidental.

I don't deny that in principle the Hindustani and Karnatak system agree with each other and perhaps much of the above mentioned aspects too might originally have been present in the Karnatak system. Yet the styles now appear different because they, in order to adjust themselves with their new surroundings after the "dark age" (Vide 'Studies in Indian Music') had to select different materials from their original store house and had to develop accordingly, drifting from each other.]¹

To appreciate this idea, it is necessary to trace the origin and development of this music.

The Origin of Sopana music

The Indian theatre is very old and the conception of the musical ensemble has its roots in the *Vedas*. The growth of drama was continuous and the emergence of *Gandharva* as a blissful combination of dance, vocal and instrumental music had much to contribute to the ancient stage. The *Epics* and the

1. When I presented a paper in the seminar on Kerala Music and Tala System, I presented this point with proper demonstrations by experts from Hindustani, Karnatak and Kathakali music.

Puranas mention the staging of dramas with proper orchestra and ancient treatises, such as the *Natyasastra*, *Dattila* etc. speak mainly about them. *Natyasastra* has greatly influenced the visual arts of Kerala such as *Kuttu* and *Kudiyattam* which paved the way for *Krishnattam* and *Ramanattam*.

Research studies¹ and scholarly remarks² suggest that the music described in the *Natyasastra* has much in common especially with the court style or the dramatic style of music described in the Tamil Epic *Cilappadhikaram*. According to Sri R. V. Poduval "the early music of Travancore may be said to be the same as pictured in the 3rd canto of *Cilappadhikaram*."³ If that is so, then there is every reason to believe that the ancient art-music of Kerala which was distinct from its pastoral and folk music and which is said to be identical with the dance and drama style of music in *Cilappadhikaram*, might have existed as a developed branch of singing bearing similarity with the music described in the *Natyasastra*.

Here I want to point out that the music described in *Dattilam*, *Natyasastra*, *Cilappadhikaram* etc. is different from the 'Vaidika' style or the priestly line of music⁴, represented in *Vedic* singing. In principle *Vaidika* music, had much in common with the 'Laukika' music represented in the dramatic style of music which was patronised by Royalty, as well as with the freer style, patronised by the public. But it was different from them in practice. In structure the *yamas* (*svaras*) *krushta prathama*, *dvitiya*, *tritiya*, *chaturtha*, *mandra* and *atisvarya* of *Vedic* music were the same as the *sapta svaras* etc. of the *Laukika* style, but their grouping was different. The former had a downward scale and movement, while the latter had an upward movement.⁵ The structure and sections of the musical forms like *gita*, *giti*, *gana*, etc. were same in both, but their ideas and the interpretation was different. In shape and technique, the instruments such as *Vana*, *Nali*, *Venu*, *Dundubhi*, *Karkari* were the same in both, but their use and playing were different.

This is but natural because the aim of *Vedic* music used in *yajnas* and in other spiritual pursuits was different from the *Laukika* styles meant for entertainment. The former was controlled by strict rules and discipline while the latter was marked for its freedom of expression. This being so, the above styles could have existed only as two different branches of singing. Of course, there might have been mutual understanding and adaptations. Yet they retained their individuality. It was also true that the prosperity of one style of music was often detrimental to the other. As fortune played tricks with them they were prosperous in turns.

1. *Chilappadhikarattisai nunukka Vilakkom* — by Shri Ramanathan.

2. *Ibid*, Introduction by Shri Mudikondan Venkataramayyar.

3. *Music in Travancore* — by Shri R. V. Poduval.

4. "A history of Indian music" by Swami Prajnananda

5. *Ibid* p. 91.

The destiny of Kerala stage-music too was not different from such trends.

There might have been a sudden set-back and slow deterioration of its stage-music with the emergence of the *Bhakti* movement of the South with its captivating music condensed in the *Thevarapans* and *Nalayira prabandhom* etc. Though this music could have been a later development of the ancient Tamil music, it had marked differences from the secular and the dramatic styles, as it represented an entirely different line of music, loaded with philosophical thought and spiritual pursuit. "The composers of these religious hymns have shown an admirable instinct for form, grace and colour, sweetness and spiritual emotion, and they have left for posterity gems of spontaneous songs, mellifluous and well-balanced in diction, having a delicate beauty of sound and a mounting and piercing melody which goes straight to the heart of man".¹

The popularity of this religious movement and its music throughout Kerala curbed dramatic progress but nourished a spiritual awareness, with the result that a new style of singing evolved in the temple which was commonly called "*Sopana*". This was the blissful combination of regional tunes and the new religious music, the reminders of which are still perceivable in *ragas* like *Puraniru*, *Padi*, *Kanakuranji*, *Khandaram* etc.

The conception of Sopana

It is said that this music acquired its name through the association of the place called '*Sopana*' where it used to be sung in the temples. The word literally means a stair-case, or ladder or a base (according to the ancient Tamil lexicon *Tivakaram*). This, when interpreted in the musical sense would suggest a singing, progressing systematically from the lower octaves to the higher, taking every note as a "base". It has been defined as "singing which is generally slow in time with the notes going higher and higher and rising in pitch and intensity as they proceed producing sweet melody and grace."²

(By this, the author means only the *alapana* which is adopted for singing, *ragas* and *slokas* in temples and in *Kathakali*, such as *Nandi sloka*, *sucana sloka* etc.)

It seems, this music did not influence the Kerala stage for some time. The deteriorated condition of the stage and stage-music continued for quite a long time till the whole Kerala stage underwent a change at the hands of Prince Manaveda, who introduced the *Ashtapadis* of Jayadeva, with its

1. Travancore State Manual, Vol. IV, Chap. XXII, p. 555.

2. Travancore State Manual, Vol. IV, p. 555.

appealing theme and alluring music in the country. Its influence "caused modifications in the sentiment of the music and drumming, and in the elaboration of dressing. Out of the changes in subject, sentiments and method, arose the distinctive *Krishnattam* which reached its fullest development about fourteenth century".¹

"*Krishnattam* was an adaptation of the *Ashtapadi* of Jayadeva. It is divided into 8 parts, each designed for a night's performance... the general construction of *Kathakali* is more like Jayadeva's *Ashtapadi* than anything else."²

Since the music and the musical pieces of *Kudiyattam* was unsatisfactory, naturally King Manaveda, the founder of *Krishnattam* wrote the songs and the music for *Krishnattam* on the model of *Geeta Govinda*, which had already won the appreciation of the people through its repeated performances in temples and in public places. This style which was later on adapted in the music of *Kathakali*, by Vira Kerala Varma "has on the whole, a strangeness added to beauty, modelled on Jayadeva's *Ashtapadi*."³

The introduction of the music of *Geeta Govinda* to the stage, and throughout Kerala as a whole, "in many respects transmitted the musical melodies extant in the country and gave them a profound grace and dignity combined with majesty. The grace of sound and diction exquisitely employed in them set a standard of musical melody in the state".⁴ Naturally the existing style of singing of the temple too came under its sway creating a mutual understanding between the stage and temple music, at least in certain respects.

Thus grew the music of Kerala, through definite principles into a developed branch of singing, which is different from *Kachery padhati* of the *Desiya* or Karnatak. Let us analyse it in detail from various points through a comparative study.

Here also I wish to point out that a few attempts have been already made by scholars to ascertain the individuality of the Music of Kerala on the basis of a comparative study with the *Kacheri padhati* of classical Karnatak music. As the aim and conception of the concert style, where the musician is the deciding authority and musical ability is the main consideration, is entirely different from that of the temple, opera and dance music, naturally the attempt would not have produced the desired results. For a worthwhile study, only the above mentioned style has to be taken

1. Travancore State Manual, Vol. IV, p. 549.

2. *Krishnattam* — by Dr. Kunjan Raja, Madras Music Academy J1 (1958).

3. Travancore State Manual Vol. IV, p. 557.

4. Ibid J1. p. 556.

into consideration and not the *Kacheri pahati* with its elaborate vocal outputs like *briga* etc., *druta sancara*, *tanam*, *svaram* singing, *anuloma*, *pratiloma* and so on.

The temple music of Kerala is also considered to be typical of Kerala music. But here the representation is just partial because *bhakti bhava* alone is taken into consideration. The devotional colour being universal, the singing will have much in common with not only the devotional music of the ancient Tamil Nadu out of whose music the land developed its typical *Sopana* singing, but also with the religious styles of the Karna taka, Maharashtra and Punjab. Ideas are common in the religious *keertans* of Kerala, *Abhang* of Maharashtra and the great *Grantha Sahib* of the Sikhs. When ideas and feelings are identical there will be some similarities in the expression as well. So one has to turn mainly to the music of *Kathakali* for Kerala music in all its totality, charm and individuality.

As elsewhere said, the music of *Kathakali*, *Ashtapadiyattam* etc. represents the dramatic line of music, and as such it is worthwhile to compare it first with South Indian Opera music.

Kathakali and Karnatak Opera

The popular operas of the South of course have similar themes, characters, dramatic situation, dance and songs as in *Kathakali*. Yet they cannot be compared with *Kathakali* because a good number of them are still on the level of folk varieties. A few developed styles like *Kuchipudi* (here I mean not the one represented by a single male or female dancer but the one represented by a group of traditional actors and musicians of its original place) also cannot be considered because in them, we see the actors themselves talking, singing and dancing and as such the technique cannot be the same as that of *Kathakali* — a performance which depends upon background music for its elaborate expression of *bhava* and *rasa*.

A very highly developed classical dance with similar background music — both vocal and instrumental — is *Bharata Natya*. Of all of the other dance styles, this may provide ideal material for a comparative study. But here too also, there are certain limitations.

Bharata Natya and Kathakali

Bharata Natya is not an opera but a solo dance. So it may naturally have only limited dramatic situations when compared with those of *Kathakali*, the full-fledged dance-drama, which has a number of characters and situations. Moreover, *Bharata Natya* is a female dance and this gives predominance to *lasya* over *tandava* and of *sringara* over other vigorous sentiments, which appear only as passing facets.

This being so, the *padas* of *Bharata Natya* have to take *sringara* as their main theme. This limitation causes minimisation in the field of *raga*, *tala*, and *laya*. Only *ragas* which are capable of portraying the *sringara* in its various shades and stages are chosen. *Tala* and *laya* are also fixed accordingly. As there is no need for such a reservation, in *Kathakali* the range of *raga*, *tala* and *laya* is vast and varied.

Even in dealing with *sringara* and identical situations in love, using similar *raga* and rhythm too, there is a difference. Leaving a few *sringara padas* which are often not handled by composers and dancers in public-performances, the well-known *padas* are loaded with “*sringara*” outwardly and “*bhakti*” inwardly, since they have to convey the mortal self in its struggle to merge with the self, through the veil of the sweet male and female relationship, immortal love. *Pacha sringara* is a technical term connected with ‘*pada*’ the typical love composition of the South Indian Music. It means expressing erotic ideas without any restrictions or reservation. The subdued sense of devotion controls the overtones of passion and this purifies the expression of the musicians, dancer and the expectation of the receptive minds. In *Kathakali*, there is no such restriction. So the expression of the sentiment becomes more aggressive or submissive according to the nature of the character and the demand of the situations. Not only that. In *Bharata Natya*, we see the expression of the mortal feeling becoming nobler and nobler creating a sense of eternity around, while in *Kathakali* we see even immortality coming down to the level of mortality creating a sense of reality around it with the result that even when a god speaks words of love to his beloved, the spectator is reminded of his own experiences. The difference in the interpretation naturally has to be reflected in the music and dance as well.

The instruments, instrumental music and the arrangement of the instrumentalists and above all the names of the *talas*, their structures, mnemonics, expression orchestra and rhythmic “conclusions” — all are of different nature in these styles. The *Kathakali* ensemble consisting of *chenda*, *maddalam*, *ilattalam*, *idaika* and *chengala*, has nothing in common with that of *Bharata Natya* consisting of the melodious flute, tuneful *mridanga*, sweet *manjira* and *vina* or harmonium. Here the artists sit at ease and present the music peacefully and earnestly, while in *Kathakali*, although the play may last for a whole night, the musicians have to stand and perform. This is because, to me it seems, that the orchestra of *Kathakali* has a prominent part in creating the dramatic situations by providing suitable assistance.

Another major difference is in their styles of singing which I feel is the result of the difference in their technique as dance forms. I will make myself clear. Compared to *Bharata Natya*, in *Kathakali*, there is more scope for creative expression not only through *colliyyattam* but also through *padardha vyakhyanam* — an indebtedness it owes to *kuttu* and *kudiyattam*.

Suppose there is an address like "*Kamala locane Kante*" ("thou my wife Oh lotus eyed one") in both the styles. What I have seen generally in *Bharata Natya* is the expression of these words through *hasta mudra*, and the reflection of the sentiment through facial expression and the movement of feet according to the tempo of the song. Twice or thrice, the *mudras* of these words will be shown by the *Nartaki* in full harmony with the words and music, i.e., the *mudra* for "Kamala" would be shown when the musician sings the word "Kamala" and so on. Perhaps some experts may do it a little more elaborately. But even then it may not be as elaborate as that of *Kathakali* where the actor does not merely interpret the words in terms of gestures but goes on elaborating the *bhava* and the hidden *rasas*, extensively. Here I mean not the present-day *Kathakali* which lasts for one or two hours and which minimises the *colliyattam* etc. to a great extent, those shows which last through the whole night giving full freedom to the actor to improvise as he likes. In such situations the musician has to lend adequate musical support to this elaborate treatment till the dancer gives a hint to him that he has concluded his improvisation and the musician can proceed to the next line or idea. It is humanly impossible to repeat the line for such a long time with different *sangatis* to avoid monotony. Moreover, there is another limitation. He cannot sing all the *sangatis* or the set patterns of variations which are generally allowed in *kritis* etc. because certain *sangatis* may harm the atmosphere. So the *Kathakali* musician has to resort to some other way of singing which finally leads him to a singing resembling that of the musical elaboration of the *pallavi vinyasa* or *kriti niraval*.

Pallavi, Kriti niraval, and Kathakali pada

Like *Pallavi*, the *Kathakali pada* too has a *virama* or *pada garbha*, (stopping point) where the first part of the *tala* ends and the first part of the song rests on the principal note of the *raga*. Like the *Pallavi*, the *pada* too is particular in keeping the right starting point, etc. But the exposition of the *pada* can be counted only as the simplified improvisation of the *pallavi vinyasa* at its beginning stage. To be more precise, the complicated rhythmical patterns, strict adherence to the original structure and the over dependence of the words and letters to the different *angas* of the *tala* and also the highly intellectual exposition are avoided in the *Kathakali pada* — the dramatic song—and this brings the difference between *pallavi vinyasa* and *Kathakali pada vinyasa*. Since *kriti niraval* is also a simplified *raga* elaboration, a comparison may be attempted. But in *kriti*, the *virama* is not always prominent; music predominates over *sahitya* (text); a systematic and gradual type of *ragalapana* from *mandra* to *tara sthayi* and from slow to fast tempo, forgetting some times even the lyrical value of the song is also permissible and these aspects make the *kriti niraval* different from *Kathakali* music which has to adjust its *vinyasa* according to the idea of the song and the demands of the situation.

What is this adjustment? In what way is that different from Karnatak? Has it got some affinity towards any other system or style of singing? To clear these doubts, we first of all, have to know the *raga alapana smapradaya* of these two styles.

Ragalapana in Kathakali and Karnatak music

As I said in the beginning, the basic principles of these two styles are the same. Apart from the minor *ragas* like *Puraniru*, *Khandaram*, *Padi* etc. which exist in both these styles with identical names but with different *svara* structures, the major section of the *ragas* like *Todi*, *Mohana*, *Kalyani*, *Pantuvarali*, etc. is one of and the same in these styles. Yet when they are heard, they appear different. This is because there lies a peculiarity in *Kathakali* in its

- i selection of certain musical phrases in a *raga* which I would call *sthayas* and which are not very common in Karnatak, ⁱ in that particular *raga*;
- ii fixation of range or *sthayis* and *angas* (*Purvanga* and *Uttaranga* division) to *ragas* which are tri-*sthayi ragas* according to *Karnatak* conception;
- iii application of *gamakas* like *andolan*, *lina* etc. to certain *svaras* of a *raga* which may not be a common trait so far as those *svaras* are concerned in Karnatak music.

These peculiarities make an identical *raga* structure appear different when heard in *Kathakali* music. The indifference towards a deep study on these aspects has already cast a shadow over *sopana* music and has condemned it as a corrupt form of the Karnatak style. Since that can only be a hasty conclusion, let us set it aside and think about its scientific basis.

As I said earlier, *Kathakali* is a mime-drama and music is its tonal expression. As such it consists of an ensemble of voices and instruments. Here the musician as well as the instrumentalists are expected to perform — not according to their own will and pleasure, but according to the demands of the situation. Their aim, therefore, will be to search for various musical ways by which they can effectively express the different mood and situation in all its variety and diversity. So naturally, here the musician has to elaborate those parts of the song which the character chooses for elaboration. He has to stop where the dancer concludes. Moreover his singing should be such as to convey the idea of the song and situation

ⁱ The *sthayas* are called “*angas*” in Hindustani music, where *raga* and *anga paddhati* are still in vogue. One may refer to Prof. Roy’s article on “*sthayas*” appearing in the Madras Music Academy J1 Vol. XXIV for more information.

at their dramatic best. In short he has to cry, laugh, quarrel etc. through his music in order to encourage the actor and strengthen the situation. Certain sentiments especially like *karuna*, — cannot be made natural, if the expression of the *sahitya* through the music, does not show a sense of helplessness. A *raga* chosen for expressing the idea may be a correct choice. But even then all the *svaras* may not help the musician in conveying the idea at its best. So he has to concentrate on that note or notes—let us call it *jiva svara* or *svaras*—and certain phrases mainly for his interpretation. Thus in Kerala music the *sthaya* becomes very prominent and it is clear in the words of the late Attoor Krishna Pisharoti — the greatest authority on Kerala music and *Karnatak* music.

“Compared to all other systems of music, in Kerala music, there is great importance on the ‘*jiva svara*’ called *Amsa svara*. Kerala music contains mostly “*vicitra sthayas*” consisting of 3 or 4 notes with special prominence to “*Raga sthaya*” which brings the *raga bhava* of a *raga* to its best.”¹

I am immediately reminded of the lines of Pt. Ranade about the *alapa* in *Hindustani* music. He says, “The constant aim of the artist is therefore to make the unique possible effect with a few simple notes unaccompanied by any flourishes, shakes, or such graces.”²

The fixation of *sthayas* often causes fixation of *sthayis* as well. Another reason is also present. Particular *sthayas* of a *raga* intensify a certain mood. But in creating such a mood, the musician has to take into consideration not only the situation but also the characterisation. *Panchali* and *Sruppanakha* narrate the story of their molestation to their brothers. But their expression may not be and should not be similar. *Nala* and *Kirata* express their love for *Damayanti*. But the expression of their love should not be similar even if the songs are set in the same *raga*, *tala* etc. While singing for the noble characters the musician has to safeguard their nobility by making the expression controlled and dignified and vice versa. For sober characters and dignified and refined sentiments *mandra sthayi sancharas* will be more effective and vice versa. Hence in *Kathakali*, the *sthayi* fixation is essential even in *ragas* which are *tristhayi* according to *Karnatak* music.

Being the voice of the character, the musician has to attack somebody at the top of his voice in wrath or to appeal to somebody in a tired tone of despair. Sometimes it so happens that the musician has to give expression to these different sentiments through the same *raga*. He ably carries out his job not only by restricting his music to the higher or lower

1. Radio talk, published in the Mathrubhumi Weekly (1956).

2. *Hindustani Music* by Ranade.

octaves but also by changing the tonal qualities of the same notes and phrases of the *raga*. Different timbres have different significant data, like *Ratri*, *Rajani*, *Nisa Yamini* etc. have different significance, though they denote the general meaning "night". Likewise the same note also can lend different meaning under different contexts when used in a straight-forward way, or with certain *gamakas* or with controlled or amplified tones. To denote an out-cry or order, or to make a tense situation effective and realistic through music, straight notes are often used in *Kathakali*. Sober and solemn moods will have *gamakas* like *andolan* and *lina* and for other lively situations, other matching *gamakas*. This explains why notes of a *raga* are often used in a straight way, and certain *gamakas* not in practice for certain *svaras* of *ragas* in Karnatak music are introduced in this style.

In this context Attoor remarks "In Kerala Sangit prominence is always given to the swinging type of *gamaka* called *andolanam*, and other *gamakas* like *akarshanam*."¹

Such traits cannot be illustrative of a corrupt version but could only be of a very highly developed musical tradition, the origin of which may be as old as the music of *Geeta Govinda*, if not as old as that which is described in the *Natyasatra* or *Cilappadhikaram*. To understand its scientific basis, a comparative study of this music with North Indian music system with particular stress on its *sthaya* and *raga* principles, *vadisamvadtva* and *purvanga-uttaranga* rules may be most helpful. Not the *janaka janya raga krama*, but the *sthaya anga paddhati* is followed here. Hence *ragas* arising out of the same *svara krama* like *Deshkar*, *Jayat Kalyan* and *Bhupali* or *Marva*, *Puriya* and *Sohani*, are common here. These *ragas*, though they have the same notes, sound different because their *sthayas* (characteristic phrases), *sthayis*, application of *gamakas* etc. are different. I am inclined to believe that in *Kathakali* though we call a *raga* *Mohana* or *Todi*, they may not express the same *ragasvarupa* or *svabhava* when they are used in different situations to depict different moods for reasons already explained. For its science, we may look to the principles of Hindustani music. Not only the *raga rupikarana* and *alapana sampradaya* of both the styles seem to be similar, even the musical form *khyal* and its elaboration, which according to Sri Rajamannar is "the simplified form of *pallavi* singing," provide sound material for a comparative study with the *Kathakali pada*. But this does not mean that *Kathakali pada* and style of singing, are completely identical with Hindustani music. In certain respects there are some similarities. That is all. After all, *khyal* and its singing represent the concert line. As such how can it contain the Kerala opera music completely?

Conclusion

I have attempted to study Kerala Music as a distinctive style of

1. Radio talk, published in the Weekly Mathrubhumi.

singing which is different from the Karnatak and Hindustani systems of music, though bears similarity with them in many respects. This, according to me is due to the fact that Kerala music especially the music of *Kathakali* represents the dance and drama line of music, where the musician and the instrumentalists are not leading but assisting a play by giving voice to its characters and situations.

I have tried to analyse its distinctive features. More work is needed to substantiate my findings. This task may be a tedious affair because the genuine system seems to be on the verge of extinction and what we generally hear as *sopana* often tends to be a caricature of the old style. Many of the *Kathakali* singers are not familiar with the Kerala style or even the Karnatak music, in their purity and originality. In their indifference to learn any of these in their proper form and perfection they mix up the whole thing and present something which does not have either the simplicity and appeal of the original old style or the scope and refinement of the Karnatak tradition. Quite often the ignorance of *Karnatak* music principles, indeed not merely *Karnatak*, but even basic music principles are passed off as a genuine feature of *Sopana*. The *pada* 'Samyamakannorudyanaṁ' will have its first line sung in *Pantuvarali raga*, and second line in *Purvakalyani* or in both and this "peculiarity" if questioned, will be interpreted as the *sopana* way of singing! It seems that taking liberties with the *ragas*, singing them in and out of tune, etc. is to be accepted as the traits of *sopana* music. This is a little too much for genuine art lovers and critics to accept.

Restoring a noble musical tradition that was once Kerala's pride and preserving it as the land's typical music style is a great task. But nourishing faulty singing in its name is very dangerous. It is better to have the dance music of the Karnatak system introduced in *Kathakali* rather than to allow this trait to continue. A typical style of music was absolutely necessary when the elaborate technique of *Kathakali* and its traditional presentation lasting for several nights continually were in full swing. Now the situation has changed and the presentation has been reduced to a couple of hours, if not just an hour. *Kelikottu* has lost its significance as the audience arrive by invitation cards and are punctual to the second. The elaborate *purappadu*, *colliyattam rasabhinaya* etc. have just a nominal existence, as the audience — often of a cosmopolitan nature — does not wish for them in detail. Characters move swiftly and the story passes off dramatically within the fixed period of time. Any good music can satisfy the musical requirements of such a presentation. A few promising young musicians trained in *Karnatak* style are already faring well in these types of abridged *Kathakali* performances.

One feels happy in welcoming this trend. Though it is not *Sopana* and as such it has a few limitations, it provides good music to the great art of Kerala named *Kathakali*.